

*His Highness, The Aga Khan*

It has been for all of us a very challenging experience to come to an island with such a multiplicity of history and to be able to listen to the problems of building in the developing world and how they are dealt with.

The fact that the President of Tanzania was willing to open the seminar and that the President of Zanzibar was also there with his Chief Minister is ample evidence of our shared beliefs that housing the increasing populations of the developing world is a major issue. I wish to thank all the contributors to the Award seminar. I know there were many difficulties to overcome to organise this seminar, to get everyone to Zanzibar, to enable them to stay and to move around. Without the support of many people, this seminar would not have occurred.

I wish to express my admiration to the Government of Zanzibar for having taken the initiative to sustain and enhance and support the Stone Town. This is an exciting initiative, one which I would hope to see replicated with success throughout the Islamic world. The restoration of these historic cities should not be an exercise exclusively in cultural continuity but an exercise in economic rehabilitation and the provision of new economic opportunities for people who did not have that opportunity before.

In preparing for this seminar, one of the concerns that the Steering Committee had was that the papers should be of the highest quality possible and available to the participants early enough so that there would be the possibility to read them, to reflect over their contents and to make the seminar discussion as constructive as possible. I wish on behalf of the Award to thank all the contributors for a set of papers which I considered outstanding. They were absolutely excellent and without doubt enhanced the quality of the discussions.

If anything has characterised this seminar, it is the feeling that housing is the essence of individuality. It is probably the built form that is most often and most consistently individualised by every family however poor or however rich.

I ask myself the question therefore — what are the processes which will enable housing to be individualised at all levels of need and this seminar has addressed this problem creatively and

effectively. It has rejected the concept of numbers. It has, in other words, said that it is simply not possible to treat thousands of families as numbers on a piece of paper. They are not numbers, they will never be numbers and if you produce shelter for them on that premise, you are way off the mark.

Secondly, the seminar has said if you cannot deal with issues on that basis, what are the structures, what are the systems, what are the processes that need to be put in place so that numbers become manageable, needs become comprehensible, aspirations can be served and there can be a dialogue between those who are responsible for producing housing and those who are going to be the recipients of housing?

The seminar has also underlined the fact that there are many roles for the architect and they probably differ substantially between the industrialised world and the Third World. In the years ahead it may well be necessary for areas of specialisation. That has happened in most other professions, particularly the ones which are increasingly technological and that is probably a direction in which the architectural profession will need to go. In fact it is already happening in the industrialised world with specialities in high-tech areas such as hospital design.

But the most fundamental role that I felt was underlined here was the role of the architect as communicator and the need for the architect to comprehend the individual, or the family, or the families, or the constituencies for which he is building. If that comprehension is not established ultimately he is likely to find the wrong solution because the diagnosis of the problem has been incorrect. It is one of the most interesting aspects of this seminar. The architect must not only be a master of form, he has to be a communicator and I hope this seminar has given architects the possibility to communicate at many different levels and on a variety of subjects. In doing so I trust they will be able in the years ahead, more successfully to address one of the greatest challenges facing the human race which is to build for itself in quantity and quality, appropriate shelter.